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Biography

of

The Late Boies Henrose and Family



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BIOGRAPHY OF THE LATE BOIES PENROSE, STATES-
MAN, GENIUS AND MARTYR, WITH ADDITIONAL
INFORMATION AS TO HIS FAMILY.

By J. WESLEY WATERS

Who is in possession of the secrets of the late Senator and family

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The information herein given as to the personal history of the late Senator Boies Penrose and his family was secured through intimate association with him after I had become attached to his Committee Room in Washington, and where he became interested in me. By this personal contact and knowledge of his ability, I pause to say that he "Put his faith in God," and to let the world know of his greatness, and to give credit to his character. He promoted the nation's welfare and rejoiced at its prosperity.

In this small biography, I have tried to give a history of his intellectual and political power, combined with representative government by the former National Committeeman and his family, who came to Philadelphia in the time of William Penn, and were among the earliest settlers.

A mental and political genius, he guided and protected the destinies of the City, State and Nation for almost two decades, and his career may be characterized by five main points:

1. His first, last and only love was his country.
2. He despised hypocrisy, deceit and ignorance, and classed them as enemies of mankind.
3. He protested against dictatorship, and never condoned Fascism, Nazism or Communism in his lifetime, but believed in

government of the People, for the People and by the People.

4. He was an authority on tariff and revenue.

5. He protected the nation's manufacturers and working men, just as our President is striving to do at present.

Born of English lineage, Episcopalian belief, and wealth, he was the son of Richard A. F. and Sarah Penrose, and brother of Richard, Charles and Spencer, the latter one surviving and now living in Colorado Springs, Colorado. He graduated from Harvard, but did not attend Law School until the last year of his college term. At the end of that year he failed to pass his examination in law, at which his father was greatly disappointed, but who was successful in securing for him a second examination. Senator Penrose told me that, because of his father's disappointment and also because he realized the necessity of some legal training in his future career, he strongly determined to pass this second test. He said he arose early one morning and studied hard and constantly for one day, took the examination, and was awarded the degree of Magna Cum Laude.

His father, who was a noted doctor and surgeon, was a graduate of Dickinson, and his brothers are graduates of Harvard. Richard, Jr., was a geologist; Charles was a physician, and Spencer an engineer. Dr. Charles Penrose was married, and the father of Boies, Jr., and a daughter, Sarah, named for her grandmother, Sarah Hannah Boies. Spencer married Mrs. Julia Lewis in 1906. Sarah is now Mrs. Andrew van Pelt, and Boies, Jr., named after his uncle, the late Senator Boies Penrose. Boies Penrose, 2nd, married Baroness Frances Winslow de Chollet of Paris, France, in 1925. The latter was divorced in 1927. They have one daughter, Frances Penrose.

Boies Penrose, Sr., attended Harvard with the late President Theodore Roosevelt, and was one of the first patricians of his day

to enter the field of politics. His progressive ideas made him fully cognizant of the difficulties he would meet in order to gain party recognition that had long been disdainfully left to the mercies of saloon and dive keepers, ward heebers and their associates. He was long desirous of having the political affairs put in the hands of clean citizens. He espoused the candidacy of La Barre Jayne, electing him to City Council. That brought him to the favorable notice of Buck Devlin, leader of the 8th Ward, who won for Penrose permission to go to Legislature. I pause to say here that Buck Devlin was a good, honest man, and remained loyal to Penrose until the time of his death.

At this time an agent of P. T. Barnum asked the Senator to write a pamphlet on white elephants, which he did. Barnum sold these pamphlets all over the country, thereby giving Penrose national fame. Barnum offered to reward him, but he refused.

"Izzy" Durham, then City Leader, and Matthew Quay, State Leader, occupied hotel rooms before opening sessions in those days so that all legislators might pay courtesy calls, and also reach them quickly, but Penrose was a Liberal, snubbed Quay, and spurned his hotel quarters, but finally won a personal invitation to dinner with Quay.

Penrose went to the State Senate two years later, then quickly became Quay's leader for the State at the age of twenty-eight years, when the latter went to the national Senate.

Penrose was very aristocratic, and, scorning the petty grafting of Quay's aides, he began to apprise the people of this grave danger and they were glad to deal with him honestly. He wanted to be Mayor, and Quay backed him, but Dave Martin, equally cynical, joined the Reformers and defeated his Republican nomination, equivalent, in those days, to election. This was his first and only

political defeat. Then Quay decided to send him to the National Senate, despite his Mayoralty defeat, but John Wanamaker, opposition candidate, had substantial strength in the Legislature also, which then elected United States Senators. Penrose was advised that Wanamaker had been told that the seat might cost \$200,000.00; he went to New York, returned two days later, met Quay, and was successful in defeating Wanamaker for U. S. Senate in 1897.

Before Quay died in 1904, Penrose was a leader of Pennsylvania, and, with Quay's support, was well on his way to full leadership of the National Republican Party. He became greater, also in national affairs. Some time later, he became the Chairman of the powerful Finance Committee, which, with the Ways and Means Committee in the House of Representatives, framed all tariff and bills of revenue, the latter, of course, originating in the House.

He actually directed the nomination of Taft with the promise of Teddy's support and mutual agreement that he would support Roosevelt for the nomination four years hence, but Taft, then President, bolted this agreement, while Penrose, remaining loyal to the Republican Party, sided with Taft, and Roosevelt split the ticket, thereby causing the election of President Wilson.

Due to his enormous size and good health, Penrose was a hearty eater, and when he was ill, in his declining years, he drank mostly for medicinal aid. When he died, he left \$5,000.00 worth of fine spirits in his cellar at 1331 Spruce Street. He began to fail physically and, gravely ill, went to bed late in 1919, in the ancestral home, 1331 Spruce Street, Philadelphia. From there he had special wires installed during the Chicago convention in 1920, costing approximately \$700.00 a day, and he talked to the men who nominated the late President Harding, of whom he had previously asked, "How would you like to be President?" Having knowledge that Wood, Lowden, and others battled to a deadlock, when he heard the lead-

ers were switching to his candidate, he said to Leighton Taylor, in a low voice, "Tell them to throw it to Warren." And it was a wheel-chair victory.

On his return to Washington, D. C., for the inauguration of President Harding, I made an appointment with him for Saturday, March 5, and went over to the Committee Rooms in the Capitol to see him privately.

Boies Penrose passed away the following New Year's Eve, December 31, 1921, at Wardmen Park Inn, Washington, D. C., and his remains were conveyed to Philadelphia at dawn. Four cars accommodated the family. He was buried January 5, 1922, at 7:30 A.M., from his late residence on Spruce Street. Secrecy in burials is the family tradition, hence the immediate family only, namely his brothers, Richard, Charles and Spencer; Sarah and Boies, Jr., children of Dr. Charles Penrose; Miss Sarah Penrose, a cousin, of Carlisle, Pa.; Leighton Taylor, Miss Mabel Clemmenden, a nurse, and perhaps three other persons whom I failed to observe closely. There was a short service at the grave in Laurel Hill Cemetery.

Penrose was a Mason and Knight Templar, and a member of the Union League.

His father was the late Richard Alexander Fullerton Penrose, who was professor of obstetrics in the University of Pennsylvania from 1863 to 1888. His mother was the late Sarah Hannah Boies, for whom he was named. His grandfather was Charles Bingham Penrose, former President of the State Senate of Pennsylvania and Solicitor for the U. S. Treasury Department, as well as a noted lawyer.

His great-grandfather was Clement Biddle Penrose, one of the three Commissioners for Territory ceded to the United States by France.

His eldest brother, Dr. Richard Alexander Fullerton Penrose, was a noted geologist; trustee of the University of Pennsylvania from 1911 to 1927; former President of the Geological Society of U. S. A., fellow of the Royal Geological Society of London, England, and held chair in the University of Chicago in Geology. He was born December 17, 1862; departed this life July 24, 1933.

Dr. Charles Bingham Penrose, noted surgeon and Zoologist, Professor of Gynecology, University of Pennsylvania, 1893 to 1899, organized the Pennsylvania State Health Department. He married Katherine Drexel on November 17, 1892, and from that union two children, Sarah and Boies, Jr., survive. He was born February 1, 1863, and departed this life February 27, 1925. "Peace be to their ashes; may God rest their immortal souls."

Spencer Penrose, the sole surviving brother, is a noted mining engineer and owner of mining properties in Colorado. He resides at Colorado Springs, Colorado, and has a winter home in Honolulu and New Zealand. Besides operating mines in Colorado, he once had mining interests in China, Mexico, and supplied the United States government for years with silver and copper which was used for coinage. He financed the erection of the Will Rogers Memorial in the State of Colorado.

The writer is in a quandary as to why the State of Pennsylvania, or the National Government, has not dedicated a monument in honor of the Penrose family which, by its charities, has done so much in the advancement and benefiting of civilization.

"Fortunate is he whose friends will remember him in such a way long after he is gone," because the world is prone to forget the material successes of a man who has passed away.

Paraphrasing Biblical phrases, it can well be said of the late Senator Penrose that "By his deeds shall ye know him," and that, indeed, "A great man has this day fallen."

Since the publication of this
Biography, Spencer Penrose died
December 7, 1939, in Colorado
Springs, Colorado.

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